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ABSTRACT

The South Carolina T3 (Troops-to-Teachers) Coalition Alternative Route to Teacher Certification (ARC) Coalition postbaccalaureate program is designed to provide requisite training and credentialing for retiring military personnel to become teachers, in the schools most in need. This program offers an opportunity to prepare for a teaching career while working in a current job. Incorporating a unique blend of online instruction and hands-on practical experiences, the program is accessible around the clock and around the world. Participants may begin training within 2 years of retirement, and, through special Proviso by the state legislature, they will be classified as resident students at the four partner universities. The curriculum, grounded in a documentable knowledge base, reflects what a new, second-career professional needs to know and be able to do to become a successful teacher. Featuring a robust curriculum, a powerful e-learning delivery mode, a strong research/evaluation component, a year-long paid internship, and 2 years of follow-up with skilled mentor teachers, this program has the capacity for ameliorating the teacher shortage in South Carolina and elsewhere. (Author/AEF)

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"*Be All That You Can Be*"–Again
South Carolina Troops-to-Teachers Coalition
Alternative Route to Teacher Certification ("T^3 ARC")

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Abstract: The South Carolina T^3 Coalition has designed this alternative to provide requisite training and credentialing for retiring military personnel to become teachers in the schools most in need. Incorporating a unique blend of on-line instruction and hands-on practical experiences, the program is accessible around the clock and around the world. Participants may begin training within two years of retirement, and, through special Proviso by the state legislature, they will be classified as resident students at the four partner universities. The curriculum, grounded in a documentable knowledge base, reflects what a new, second-career professional needs to know and be able to do to become a successful teacher. Featuring a robust curriculum, a powerful e-learning delivery mode, a strong research/evaluation component, a year-long paid internship, and two years of follow-up with skilled mentor teachers, this program has the capacity for ameliorating the teacher shortage in South Carolina and elsewhere.

"What teachers know and can do is the most important influence on what students learn," *What Matters Most*, a report of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996.

Introduction

Master Sergeant Virginia Dukes grew up in Newark, the only child of a single parent living in the inner city. The Army offered her an escape from her bleak surroundings and promises of opportunity, which she took. She completed her education, had an illustrious career in training and data management, and is retiring, but at 39, she is a vital, energetic, bright, and motivated woman who feels that teaching might be a viable option for her. She also wants to locate in the Sunbelt, and has chosen to live in South Carolina.

Lt. Col. Raoul Hernandez and Maj. Donna Hansen met while both were stationed at the Beaufort Air Station. They married, raised a family, and after successful careers in the Marine Corps (she in public information, he a Provost Marshal), have decided to return to the Beaufort area. She has her degree in Journalism from the University of Montana; he received his JD degree from George Washington University. They have a desire to give back to the community, and are considering teaching as a second career.

Commander Mercer Jamison was born and raised in Pocataligo, SC, a small crossroads in the South Carolina Lowcountry. A young African-American with few local prospects, he couldn't wait to get away, and when a Navy recruiter offered him a chance to see the world and complete his education, he jumped at the chance. Now, 25 years later, with a bachelor's degree in engineering from Old Dominion University and 15 years as a nuclear engineer, he is preparing to retire and is anxious to return home, where he hopes to make a difference for rural youth. He wants to become a teacher.

The players in these three fictitious scenarios have several things in common: all have had successful careers as military commissioned or non-commissioned officers; all want to come to South Carolina; all want to teach; all are attempting to begin a new chapter of their lives; and all bring a abundance of talents and skills and a world view to an area and a career field that desperately needs them.

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However, traditional programs would require up to two years to complete after the service member leaves active duty, and they would forego a paycheck during training. Also, if they were in traditional teacher-preparation programs, their maturity, experience, expertise, and training would not necessarily be valued. Or, as in some alternative-certification programs, they would be placed in the classroom with no preparation or supervision and left to their own devices to survive (or not) in the school setting.

To be successful, aspiring teachers need more than a textbook and a handshake. They need training--not a traditional undergraduate teacher-training program (although those options continue to be available), but one tailored specifically for them, to provide necessary knowledge and skills, to provide options for demonstration of proficiency, to avail them of what they need to be successful in this social structure called "school," while acknowledging the talents, experience, and expertise that they bring with them. The training also needs to be readily accessible, and it should enable military personnel to assume a teaching position immediately upon exiting their military careers, but with continued follow up, training, mentors, and supervision—all focused upon the new teachers' success.

The South Carolina Troops-to-Teachers (T^3) Coalition has developed a program using "blended learning" (e-learning and practical, hands-on field experiences) to enable these folks to realize their dreams while concurrently ameliorating the teacher-shortage needs in South Carolina--the needs for specific content areas, in grade levels, in small, rural, or inner-city schools, for minority representation, and for male teachers.

The South Carolina Troops-to-Teachers Coalition consists of four institutions, five agencies, and a corporate partner: Clemson University, the University of South Carolina, the Citadel, and South Carolina State University have come together with five agencies (the Governor's Office, the South Carolina Center for Teacher Recruitment, the Commission on Higher Education, the Employment Security Commission, and the State Department of Education) and IBM/Lotus to craft an initiative to enable commissioned and non-commissioned officers with college degrees to secure the requisite training and credentialing to become teachers.

The target group consists of members of the armed forces, commissioned or non-commissioned officers, who possess a bachelor's degree or higher.

The reasons to tap this talented pool are numerous:

1. The military began downsizing in 1994, sending well-qualified personnel into the civilian work force.
2. Military personnel often have strong content skills, particularly in math and science.
3. Commissioned and non-commissioned officers possess high levels of training and education; indeed, many have master's degrees.
4. The potential pool is great; while the military is not presently downsizing, many active-duty personnel are making plans for retirement--often wanting to return "home."
5. Within the ranks exists a high ethnic minority ratio; this will enable us to recruit, train, and place heretofore under-represented minorities.
6. Likewise, there is a high ratio of males; this cadre can provide more men for the classrooms.
7. Their military experience as trainers; provides them with a solid foundation for a teaching career; all commissioned and non-commissioned officers have served in various training capacities during their careers.
8. They have the added benefit of being trained in providing safe and secure environments; this is an added benefit for school safety and violence prevention.
9. In their military careers, they have gained organizational, interpersonal, technical, technology, and leadership skills.
10. They are great role models for kids--mature, drug-free, and physically fit.
11. Finally, they bring a wealth of personal and professional experiences and a world view heretofore missing in our schools.

Because of their high degree of training and education acquired during their military service, because the number of teachers who can be trained from this pool is potentially much greater than many sources, and because of the high ethnic minority and gender ratios which could significantly ameliorate under-representation of ethnic minorities and men in these critical-needs areas of education, this group would be a benefit to and a resource for South Carolina's schools and our young people.

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Evolution of T^3 ARC

The T^3 ARC began in August 1999; the first year was dedicated to planning. With a small grant, the Coalition has undergone a rigorous process to design an alternative certification program to allow participants to complete their requisite course work while still on active duty using e-learning and blended-learning strategies.

The Coalition reviewed the existing literature on alternative certification, best practice, and research, to examine the programs of other states, teacher education programs, and other entities. While most states have developed or are developing routes for alternative licensure, none possesses the uniqueness of the proposed South Carolina model.

Based on the premise posited in *What Matters Most*, a report of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, *"What teachers know and can do is the most important influence on what students learn,"* the Coalition began by processing ten essential questions:

1. What do mature, new, second-career teachers need to know? Can we defend this through a scientifically documentable knowledge base?
2. What do mature, new, second-career teachers need to be able to do? Can we defend this through a scientifically documentable knowledge base?
3. What specific competencies do they need?
4. What specific competencies do they possess and can they demonstrate?
5. How do we identify these competencies?
6. How do we identify gaps?
7. Can we develop a training model based on this gap analysis?
8. What will it include?
9. How can we deliver it? Can we deliver via the Internet?
10. What resources (human, material, technological) do we need to do this?

Upon completion of this analysis, the Coalition then reviewed standards, best practice, knowledge bases, and research from the following agencies and organizations:

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)
National Association for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)
Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)
Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC)
Key Competencies (Australia)
Teachers College, Columbia University
National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (*What Matters Most*)
Renaissance Group
University of Arkansas Profile of a Beginning Teacher
American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU)
Educational Testing Service (PRAXIS)
American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE)
Holmes Partnership
National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER)
Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching
South Carolina's Assisting, Developing, and Evaluating Professional Teaching (ADEPT)
Good Teaching Matters; a Report of The Education Trust
Conceptual Frameworks of the partner universities
American Council on Education

The Coalition also adopted the following "touchstones" to guide the process and to keep the group on-track and on-target:

> "Develop high-quality pathways to teaching for recent graduates, mid-career changers, paraprofessionals already in the classroom, and military and government retirees." –National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, *What Matters Most*, Recommendation 3

> "The fundamental differences between an alternative and traditional program are the target audience, the training design, and the length of training, not the program content, rigor, or expected outcomes." --AACTE, *Alternative Preparation for Licensure: Policy Statement*

"To do and perform all things necessary to encourage, uphold, and dignify the profession of teaching." –*Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning*
The Coalition would return to these touchstones often.

The Curriculum

Upon examination of the standards and evidence, the Coalition developed two documents: (1) What teachers need to know and (2) what teachers need to be able to do. To achieve the necessary validation, these lists were widely circulated within and without South Carolina; teachers, teacher educators, parents, business people, community leaders, and the Military Assistance Council, the advisory group for the Coalition, had the opportunity for input. It was important that this be as comprehensive, as valid, and as reliable as possible.

The result is a rich, valid, robust curriculum, grounded in best practice and research, based upon what career-changing professionals need to know and be able to do to become successful teachers, (acknowledging that pedagogy for a 40-year-old professional should differ from that for a 20-year-old college sophomore AND recognizing the vast expertise and experience that military professionals bring to the profession) in nine discrete modules divided into three blocks, from the more general and theoretical to the more specific and concrete:

Block One
- Psychological Foundations of Adolescent Learning and Development
- Technology in the Classroom
- Cultural Distinctions and Diversity

Block Two
- Community Resources
- Application of Research
- Student Assessment and Evaluation

Block Three
- Methods and Strategies (content-specific in mathematics, sciences, and English/language arts)
- Classroom Organization and Management
- The Culture that is School

The Technology

The group then, upon returning to the "Ten Questions," determined that we could, indeed, take this list of what teachers need to know and, using a "gap analysis," could tailor an individualized, performance-based, open-entry program based upon the client's documented experiences and expertise, over the World-wide Web, using state-of-the-art technology and synchronous and asynchronous delivery of modules rather than traditional graduate-level courses.

From this point, we turned to the technology experts; upon reflection, it was determined that we needed a vehicle not only of getting the courses on-line, but also a means of managing variable credit, generating student transcripts, providing means of interactivity between faculty and participants, among other significant issues, and an in-depth review of technological potential yielded two likely candidates: IKON Technologies and IBM/Lotus. IBM/Lotus remains as a partner in crafting the technological methodology for on-line delivery and management of this complex project. (Due to corporate redirection, IKON is no longer a partner). The support and engagement of IBM/Lotus has been exemplary; not only is their LearningSpace a robust system, but their technical support has been exceptional.

The Academic Program

Military personnel may access the program during their last two years of active duty through the T^2 ARC Website (http://www.hehd.clemson.edu/TTT/). Since all of these folks will have bachelor's degrees (and many will come with master's degrees), content expertise is presumed; however, prior to admission into the program, the candidate must provide passing scores from the Praxis II subject-area examination to validate

currency of content knowledge. The candidate's program will be determined based upon what experiences he/she can validate from the military. University faculty will provide the personalization.

The participant will have the modules available around the clock; the professors will maintain maximum availability. Options will be available, also, for real-time discussions, chat rooms, white boards, and the like.

Additionally, since teacher education cannot occur in a vacuum, field experiences and practical applications of skills are built into each module. The experiences are as varied as the curriculum, but are a requisite part of the training, hence the "blended-learning" methodology that complements e-learning.

Also, the Coalition has designed a schedule to allow the participant to work on as many as three modules in an eleven-week period. If deployed to a combat zone, however, the "clock stops," and he or she may resume the module at the point at which he/she left it. The academic schedule of courses is presently designed through 2008, and it takes into account holidays and other pertinent issues; the university Registrar has incorporated the [essentially quarter] schedule into its semester-based calendar, thus allowing for acceleration of participants through the program. All of the support mechanisms are in place.

Upon completion of the modules, the participant will be placed in a one-year internship, during which he/she will not only undergo induction, as does any first-year teacher, but he/she will have to demonstrate the knowledge gained through the modules–the "What teachers need to be able to do" list. Resources will be made available to provide for mentor teachers and other resources necessary to assure candidate success. Accompanying this internship is a year-long seminar (also carrying academic credit), bringing together participants from the four regions with university faculty, school district and school personnel, and other pertinent, relevant resources.

The Placements

The Coalition determined four criteria for placements as critical:

1. Districts "in greatest need of technical assistance;"
2. Geographic critical teaching needs, based on criteria and annual determination of the State Board of Education;
3. Top 12% in the State for high school dropouts;
4. Proximity to military installation; must be either inner-city or rural and must meet federal poverty guidelines for "high need LEAs"

Based upon recent information from the State Board of Education regarding geographic critical needs, the Coalition has identified 78 schools throughout the state that meet one or more of the above criteria; this will likely change as new data become available.

The Coalition has determined four areas of the state; each of the partner universities will have responsibility for monitoring the internship and two subsequent years of follow up. Subsequent monitoring and support for this three-year program will be provided in partnership among the Coalition, the LEA, and the partner university. Additionally, we will gather data on successful program completion, internship, and ultimate placement within the schools and districts most in need.

Project Uniqueness

The program is unique in many ways; following is a compendium of reasons:

Participants may begin within two years of separation from military service;

Participants may participate at their duty station, anywhere in the world;

Program uses state-of-the-art technology;

Participants are provided a waiver of out-of-state tuition (Section 5A.32 of the 2002 Budget Bill, SC General Assembly);

Participants partake of a robust curriculum designed to prepare them for the realities of the classroom;

Coordination among 4 universities and 5 agencies, school districts, and a corporate partner; over 90 people have been involved in the genesis of this project, including university faculty, corporate officers, technicians, university administrators, school district personnel, military representatives, and agency staff;

Field experiences and practical application of skills are incorporated into every course;
Curriculum developed by university faculty based on what teachers need to know and be able to do;
Graduate-credit modules via Internet delivery with synchronous and asynchronous options;
One-year paid internship with skilled mentor teacher; participants will not miss a paycheck;
Placement in districts with greatest need;
Strong research/evaluation component;
Focus on retiring military with bachelor's degree or higher;
Program availability year-round, with course rotation;
Flexibility:
    Participant may "stop the clock" and resume at a later date;
    Program will be available around the clock, seven days per week;
The result is a program that is research-based, facile to use and to navigate, easy to access, is valid, is reliable, and is grounded in reality and a scientifically documentable knowledge base.

Lessons Learned

Throughout the development and implementation activities, the Coalition learned many lessons as we blazed new trails through the *Terra Incognito* of e-learning and blended learning. One of the most compelling was to identify, analyze, and document our processes as we proceeded. Following is a listing of some of the processes and some samples within each; of course, different projects will render differing processes.

Table 1: PROCESS ANALYSIS

Conceptual processes
Idea, needs assessments, literature searches

Analytical processes
Data, resources, best practice, research

Academic processes
Curriculum development, committees, materials selection

Political processes
Funding, support, consensus, residency

Marketing processes
Advertising, web site, monitoring, print media

Documentation processes
Data collection/analysis, participation, support

Fiscal processes
Grants, finances, resources

Implementation processes
Hardware, software, enrollments, fees

Continuous Improvement processes
Growth plans, adjustments, evaluation, realignment

Suggestions from the Trenches

Determine needs--yours and "theirs," whoever "they" happen to be. Nurturing partnerships is critical to the success of any collaboration. In every case, the partners have institutional goals and needs to meet; likewise the representatives of the partnership may have personal and/or professional goals for his/her participation (research, publications, *et alia*). Partnerships like the Coalition require nurturing to maintain a high level of effectiveness.

Review the literature--research, best practice, state-of-the-art, et alia. Scholars begin their work with an in-depth review of what is happening in the field they are researching; they read, review, analyze, and reflect on the work that has been done and in the areas that they are studying. Likewise, with this project, we located, through traditional and non-traditional means, the scope of the body of work in the field. What we discovered was interesting; while there was an abundance of descriptive pieces ("what we did;" "how we did it"), for example, there were very few research studies looking at the long-range efficacy of alternative programs. This provided us with another unique niche; we will be gathering and analyzing data for a long-term study of our program compared to other non-traditional as well as traditional teacher-preparation programs. This exercise also established the uniqueness of our project. There was clearly nothing else like it.

Build and nurture coalitions. It is critical to bring the appropriate parties to the table early in the process so that they have ownership within their organizations. Coalitions do not happen by accident; they are carefully nurtured and evolved. Care must be exercised, however, to avoid the evolution of factions; one way to avoid this is to work toward achieving consensus rather than majority votes.

Determine and analyze data. "Prove it," the naysayers will demand; "show me the data," potential funders will insist. You must be able to determine what kinds of data to collect and what you plan to do with the data. For example, we will want to know how our T^3 ARC participants compare to other first-year and fifth-year teachers from other alternative programs, so we must determine whether to use standardized test scores--how many pass on the first attempt, for example--in keeping with our research and evaluation design.

Continually review and adjust. Sometimes, something just will not work; do not fret over it or mourn it; adjust and learn from it. There will be divergences; there always are for pioneers. Lewis and Clark knew where they were going, but they were continually surprised along the way. Likewise, program developers need to enjoy the sights along the trail as they blaze it, but they need to be able to retrack and change direction when they hit the big water.

Engage stakeholders in processes. Who are your stakeholders? Are they policy makers? Are they private business/industry leaders? The determination of where and when a project needs outside support may mean the difference between success and failure. Bring them to the table early and enlist their endorsement; letters of support are always helpful. And make sure that they receive periodic updates of progress.

Build capacity. The intent is to create synergy—to create an effect that no partner can achieve alone; therefore, the whole becomes greater than the sum of the individual parts. But the results can be thrilling!

Document! Document! Document! Enough said.

Finally, enjoy the adventure of discovery! According to Lester Thurow (1996), "With similar persistence [to Lewis and Clark] and willingness to attempt the unknown, let our journey begin!"

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Military personnel represent a wealth of talent, experience, diversity, knowledge, expertise, skills, and world views; they are grounded in the content areas, and many have extensive training experience. What opportunities exist to install this leadership and talent in the inner-city and rural schools most in need! And our new cadre of teachers can "be all that they can be," yet again.

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